

REFORMATTING THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

*(Learning From Two Books on
Communication Research)*

HAFIED CANGARA

ABSTRACT

This article emphasized that research means searching for a theory, for testing theory, or solving a problem. In process of research, the theory is modified or rejected if the prediction and explanation are inconsistent with the behavior data. On the contrary, if the prediction and explanation of the theory are supported by the behavior data, the theory is accepted. Regarding the method and process of the research, communication research could be classified into two categories, namely; Descriptive Method consists of survey, content analysis, historical research, legal research, qualitative research, verbal and non-verbal analysis, interaction analysis, stylistic analysis and secondary analysis, and Experimental methods involved laboratory studies, controlled experiment and field studies.

I. Summary

1. Stempel, Guide H and Buce H. Westley.1981. *Research Methods in Mass Communication*. Prentice - Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. 07632.

This book started with a chapter by Philip Tichenor on the logic of social and behavioral science. Tichenor is one of theorists of mass communication institutions and processes whose work is known far beyond the world of mass communications. His chapter is meant to

be introductory to the entire book because it raises questions about the nature of knowledge and, especially, how social and behavioral scientists contribute to knowledge, taking up such questions as how we deal with causality, how we use induction and deduction, how we choose between micro and macro system models, and how we move toward verification. It is also introductory in particular to the part of the book devoted to behavioral and social science methodology, which follows :

This book focus first on theories and theory construction. Lewis Donohew and Philip Palmgreen, whose previous collaborations include a well known revision of Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, discuss the nature and role of theory in behavioral science and the process of theory "building".

Measurement, like statistics is often the subject of entire courses and series, yet, like Weaver, Keith Stamm has undertaken to cover

* Hafied Cangara is Senior Lecturer of Communication Department, Hasanuddin University. He graduated from University of the Philippines - Los Banos with a Master of Science (1987) and Doctor of Philosophy (1995) in Development Communication. He is currently Deputy Director of Post Graduate Programs Hasanuddin University.

its essentials in a single chapter. Measurement belongs logically between theory building and statistical inference.

The next six chapters concern themselves with the three most frequently used modes of inquiry in mass communication research – content analysis, the sample survey, and the controlled experiment. Each chapter is followed by a chapter devoted to the choice of research and statistical design appropriate to that research strategy.

Regarding *Content Analysis*, Stempel as the author of this chapter provided a definition it is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. The person who undertakes a content analysis study must deal with four methodological problems: selection of the unit of analysis, category construction, sampling of content, and reliability of coding. For statistical test Stempel proposed, in any content analysis study in which symbols or statements or themes are the coding unit, chi-square is more likely to yield a finding of a significant difference.

Survey, the primary characteristic of survey research that has made it such a widely used methodology is its parsimony. The important aspects to this parsimony, the used of representative sample, and interviewer. He has begun a dialogue-really an interrogation-with a respondent. In other words, it requires little more effort to collect dozens of fact from a respondent. The other characteristics are implicit of survey research, it is indirect observation and the unit of analysis typically is an individual person.

Regardless of the type of survey design, appropriate statistical representation depends on the level of measurement at which variables are conceptualized. Three types of statistical design and with appropriate strategies for analysis, descriptive studies, explanatory students, and longitudinal studies.

The last article in this part is Controlled experiment. It is a procedure for testing cause and effect relationship within a setting that permits maximum control over extraneous

variation. *Analysis of covariance (ANOVA)* is used quite often in experiments, partial correlation somewhat less often. Both mathematically extract variance in the dependent variable associated with a measured control variable.

The section of the behavioral science of mass communication could end here, but one more significant issue remains that the ethical issues, particularly between the investigations and their respondents or subjects. Also, other research method discussed in section : history, legal research and qualitative studies in mass communication.

Journalism historians will never become, nor should they become, exclusively social scientists, interested in the past only as place to conduct longitudinal tests of communication theory. Mass communication history has been ill served by impressionistic history, which was neither communication nor history. Documentary and quantitative analysis merely are system-complementary system at that of gathering and classification evidence responsive to significant historical question.

Legal studies, although one of the oldest areas of communication research has been modest in number of schools and departments of journalism. Legal research, however, serves several explicit functions, including, clarifying the law through analysis of procedure, precedent and doctrine: reforming of the old laws and creating new ones; provide a better understanding of how law operates in society, and furnishing materials for legal education.

Finally this book discussed qualitative research method in mass communication. Qualitative studies start from the assumption that in studying humans we are examining a creative process whereby people produce and maintain forms of life and society and systems of meaning and value. This creative activity is grounded in the ability to build cultural forms from symbols that express this will to live and assert meaning.

To make these concerns somewhat more concrete, four criteria by which competent qualitative studies can be judged: naturalistic

observation, contextualization, maximized comparisons, and synthesized concepts.

2. Emmert, Philip and William D. Brooks. 1970. *Methods of Research in Communication*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

The chapters in this book differ in range and level of difficulty. The authors have tried to integrate chapters and insert cross-references, and to arrange the sections and chapters in a logical sequence.

Part one, *Research Design and Setting*, include four chapters, chapter 1 presented an overview of the process of scientific investigation in communication research and selected key concepts involved in it. Among the concepts and procedures introduced were concepts and constructs, variables, hypotheses, operational definitions, and internal and external validity of designs. The concepts and principles presented are related to the bivariate methods frequently used in communication research.

Chapter 2 introduces *multivariate research design*, identifies its fundamental characteristic, and show its application to the study of communication. The nature of interacting phenomena, the fallibility of the theory of unitary causality, and the danger of manipulation contaminating the phenomena under study make it necessary that communication researchers become sophisticated in the used of multivariate research methods. Chapter 3 has sought to identify the fundamental characteristic and the basic logic of the *laboratory research setting*. This setting lends itself to various approaches to inquiry: the experiment, investigation, or the mixed model. Chapter 4 point out that *field research*, is simply any kind of research carried out in a specified locale which is perceived by specified perceivers as being free of significant researcher related deviations from everyday life. A field study per se is neither more nor less scientific than a so called laboratory study.

The chapters in part two, research methods and instruments, describe a number of methodologies for communication research, including Q-sort technique, content analysis, rating scale, nonverbal analysis, and interaction analysis. These methods of measurement are not simply theories but guides to the direction research can take in any given study. It should be pointed out that although we commonly think of a methodology as a measuring instrument, it is not. Semantic differentiation, for example, is a method of constructing an instrument ; it is not a tool of measurement. The same can be said of attitude scales. The emphasis, then in part two is on methodologies that can be used to develop measuring instruments for use in communication research.

Part three of this book focuses on new technologies that appear to be especially promoting for communication research specifically, as well as for research generally. It includes chapters on techniques of psychophysiological measurement, the place of computers in communication research, and methods of information storage and retrieval.

The technologies discussed in part three of this book appear to be of special importance to future communication research. Disciplines concerned with communication related problems are indebted to those who have pioneered in the development and application of sophisticated technologies. This section of the book deals with the more technical aspects of measurement and discusses a great deal of the new technology which has grown out of the physical and biological sciences.

II. Strengths and Weaknesses

Based on the content of these books, we find that there are a number of differences and similarities. As presented in Table 1, Stempel's book emphasizes Mass Communication while Emmert and Brooks emphasizes Human communication, particularly interpersonal communication.

Aside from the background of the authors, these books differ in purposes. Stempel and his

colleagues came from school of journalism and mass communication, while Emmert and his colleagues come from school of speech communication and educational psychology.

The purposes of these books are also different. Stempel's book gives the students broad information on the entire field, such as to pose alternative in choice of method. This choice includes methodologies useful to the university based productive scholar or other students. They also include other career. They may become archivists of mass communication

collections or writers of official media histories, they may become survey research specialist in opinion and marketing research firms or copy testers applying their experimental skills in an advertising agency, survey research skills to magazine or newspaper audiences, or they may become interpretative reporters with special skills in what we call "Precision Journalism".

Emmert's book proposes to help students acquire the knowledge and skills to design and

Table 1.

No.		Stempel	Emmert
1.	Scope	Mass Communication	Human Communication - Interpersonal Communication
2.	Type of Research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey 2. Content Analysis 3. Controlled Experiment 4. Secondary Analysis 5. Legal research 6. Qualitative Research 7. Historical Research 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Laboratory Studies 2. Field Studies 3. Verbal behavior 4. Non-verbal and Kinesick Analysis 5. Interaction Analysis 6. Stylistic Analysis 7. Content Analysis
3.	Measurement	Statistical Approach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scale 2. Score 3. Q-sort 4. Statistics
4.	Additional Issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ethic in Com. Research 2. Presentation of research 	Research Technologies : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Psychophysiological Technologies 2. Computer 3. Information Storage and Retrieval

conduct experimental research. Another purpose is to acquaint potential researcher with various methods and available instruments and to suggest new areas of research.

Although there are some differences, there are also similarities: the books were written by many authors and they discussed research procedure and perspective on communication research, as well as Content Analysis.

The books have some weakness such as limited discussion on communication which in fact it is a broad field. Stempel focuses on mass communication, while Emmert focuses on Interpersonal Communication. Actually, both of these books can be synthesized as communication research covering mass communication and interpersonal communication.

III. Concept and Procedure of Communication Research

Research in this age and time means searching for a theory, for testing theory, or solving a problem. It means that a problem exist and has been identified and that the solution of the problem is necessary.

One way to answer the problem is first to define science and then to take a choice look at the scientific method. Kerlinger (1973) defines *scientific method as “ a systematic, controlled, empirical, and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena.”*

The scientific method may be viewed as a “thinking tool” ; it is a special systematic form

of reflective thinking involving reason and observation. The Facts are gathered purposefully and systematically through the scientific approach.

The scientific methods consists of seven principal data collection, data analysis, and generalization. Each of these stages are interrelated with theory in the sense that was affected by it as well as affects it. The most characteristic feature of the research process is its cyclic nature. It usually starts with a problem and ends in a tentative empirical generalization. The generalization ending one cycle is the beginning of the next cycle. This cyclic process continues indefinitely, reflecting the progress of a scientific discipline. (Figure 1).

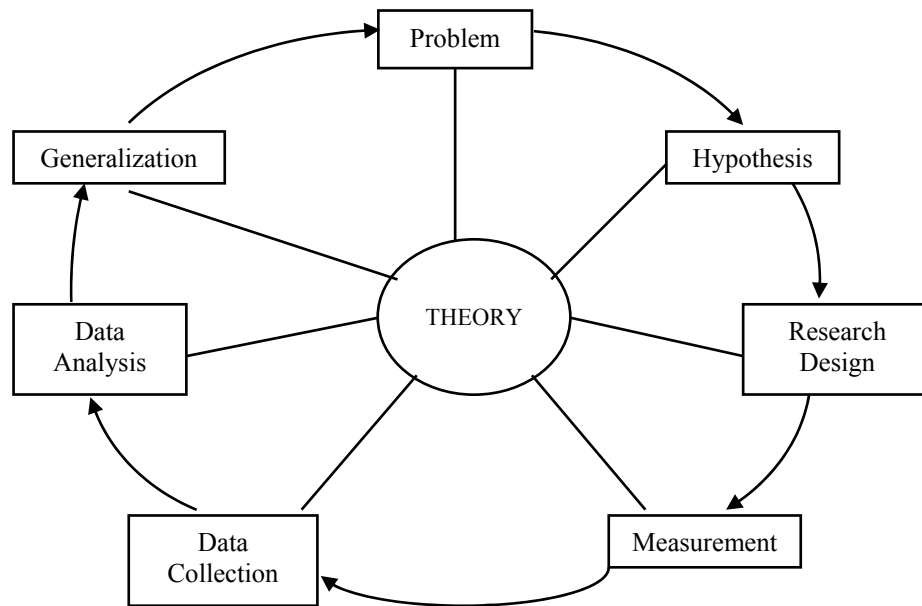


Figure 1.

Regarding whether a theory is accepted or rejected, the formation and verification could be described that from

observation about human behavior a theory is formed. The objectives of theory are explanation and prediction. (Figure 2)

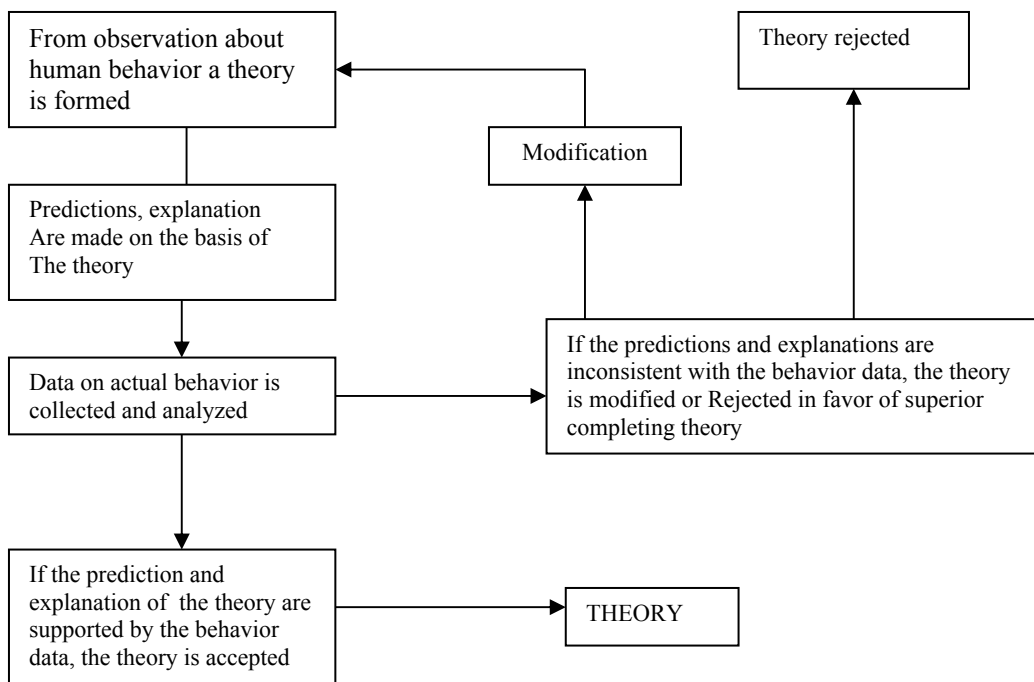


Figure 2.

Based on the observation hypotheses are formulated, and then data on actual behavior is collected and analyzed. If the prediction and explanation are inconsistent with the behavior data, the theory is modified or rejected in favor of superior completing theory. If the prediction and explanation of the theory are supported by the behavior data, the theory is accepted.

IV. Synthesize

As presented in part two, the differences between Stempel and Emmert regarding the communication research could be synthesized as follows :

Basically, all research methods follow well defined general procedures, whether basic, applied, or developmental. By purpose, research methods are considered either basic, applied or developmental. Basic or pure research is conducted primarily to test or arrive

at theory. Its main objective is to establish general principle without known or intended practical application of the findings. It is in search of knowledge for knowledge's sake.

Applied research on the other hand, refers to the application of theory to the solution or problems. It is conducted for the purpose of applying, or testing theory, and evaluating its usefulness.

Action research which is popularly used in schools, is a feature of applied research since the former involves discovering and identifying a problem in the local setting without intention generalizing its results.

Actually, the foregoing classification of research methods are in a continuous, but in reality an investigation directed at basic research also looks for practical utility of the theory in order to for it to be readily useful.

Therefore, the synthesized Stempel and Emmert ideas regarding the types of research,

basically could be classified into two types : (1) Descriptive method, and (2) Experimental method. (figure 3).

Descriptive method involves collection of data in order to test hypotheses or to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. *Experimental method* is a process of research can truly test hypothesis concerning cause and effect relationship.

The concept of experimentation gives three characteristics : an independent variable

is manipulated. All other variables except the dependent variable are held constant, and the effect of the manipulation of the independent variable on the dependent variable is observed or measured.

Generally descriptive and experimental research methods are of several types (Synthesis of Stempel and Emmert's idea regarding the type of research).

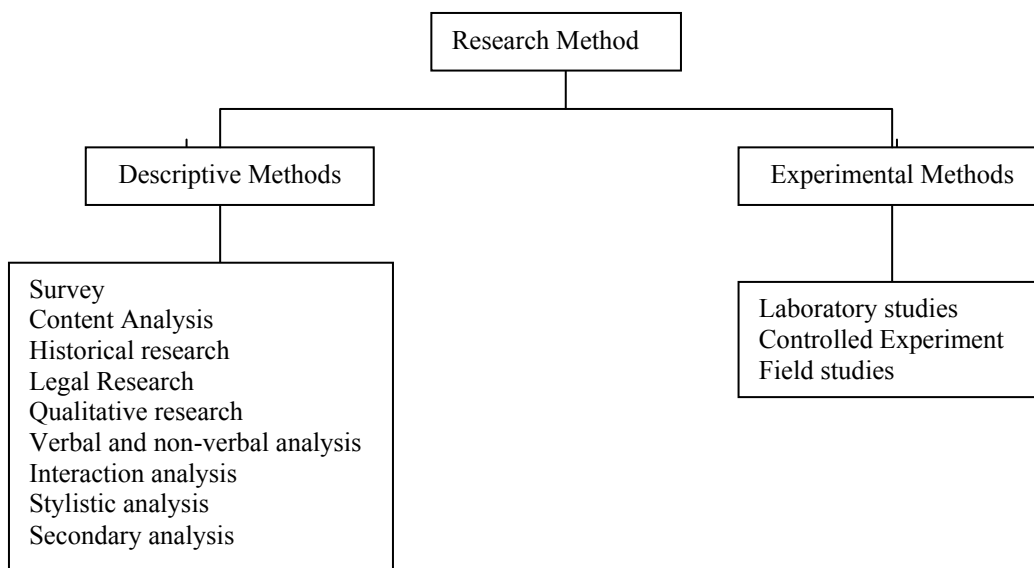


Figure 3.

Communication research is a part of social research, and social research is mostly conducted by the use of descriptive method.

Actually, the descriptive method as mentioned above, could be developed to cover other research types, such as case study Delphi technique, network analysis focus group discussion, scenario setting and participatory research types, such as Ex Post facto research, or causal comparative method and semi experimental research.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the previous explanation, it can be concluded that :

1. If the predictions and explanation are inconsistent with the behavior data, the theory is modified or rejected.
2. If the predictions and explanations of the theory are supported by the behavior data, the theory is accepted.

3. Basically, research method could be classified into two categories; Descriptive method and experimental method.
4. Communication studies could be conducted by descriptive method, conventionally classified as experimental method.
5. The validity of research can be measured by either single or multiple approach depending on the problem.

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